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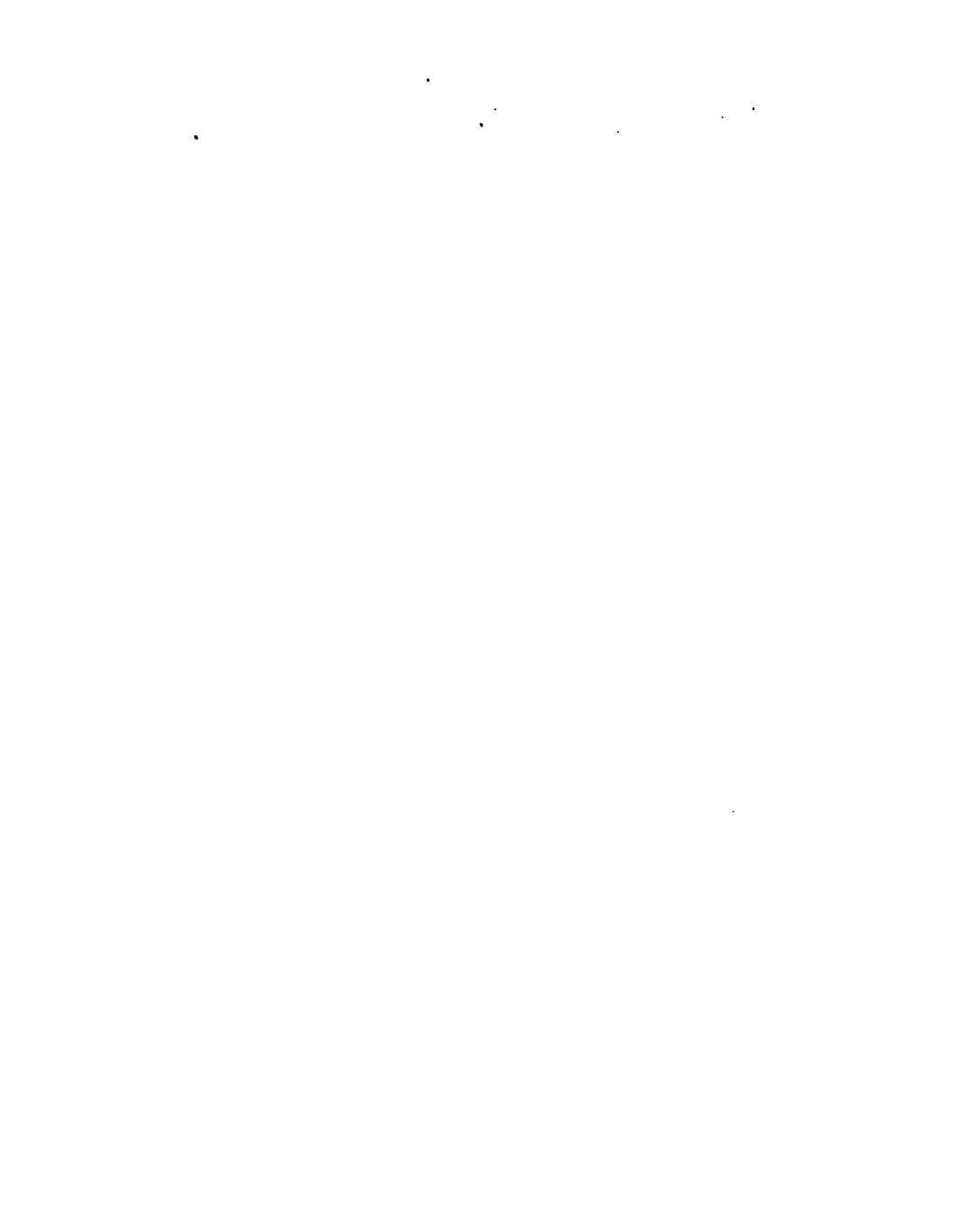
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LITANIES
OF LIFE BY
KATHLEEN
WATSON

Zwei Eier

Cleve M. Fitch

1896.



Litanies of Life

Uniform with this Volume

THE WIDOW WOMAN

By CHARLES LEE

London: James Bowden

Litanies of Life

By

Kathleen Watson

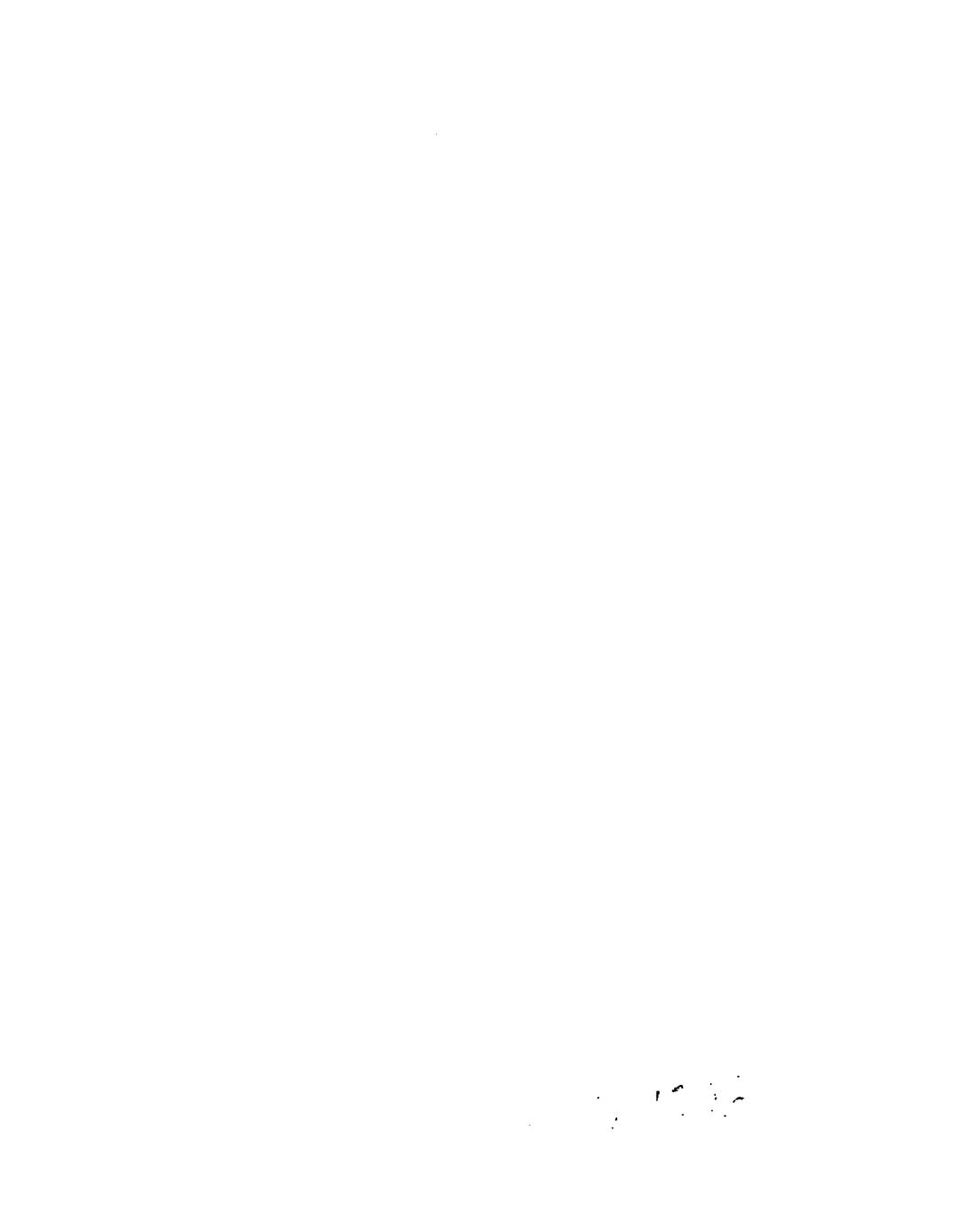
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to

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I

In
an
Attic

A

It is a bad thing perhaps to wonder too much about anything, but especially and undeniably is it so to wonder too much about one's self.

Yet I, Eleanor Harbord, spinster, of uncertain age, sitting here in the murky twilight of a London evening in October, listening to the sullen drip of the rain and the sob of the wind among the chimney tops, knowing that soon I shall be listening to nothing any more on earth, am moved to think a little and without bitterness on the life that came to me unasked, and for long years has stayed with me in spite of my weak shrinking and reluctance before its terrors, possibilities and pains.

In an Attic

And it comes to me how one summer day I was sitting under the shadow of a great tree in the heart of a wood, and my eyes wandered idly over the patches of undergrowth that stretched for miles around. Near me, rearing its pallid height a trifle above its fellows, was a little shrub struggling for a span of sickly life in the crowded overgrown space where its lot was cast. One sallow disconsolate bud drooped from its stalk, and, as I watched it, I thought how no man would desire it for any beauty that it had, how no little bird could dance upon its solitary listless bough, or plan to build its nest there, how the bees would never fly to it for honey, nor indeed any for either comfort, shelter, shade, or charm, how it was only one of a million others working out a desperate struggle for an apparently needless life.

In an Attic

And as I watched, it came to me slowly, with a black and gathering dread, that even as that little plant was, so was I; my instincts to live and make the best of life as strong as were its own; my helplessness the same; one of countless hosts striving to win my way through thorns and hostile weeds to something of that finer light and use and joy, which after all are more than dreams, and have power to crown the simplest sphere with a surpassing grace and peace.

They say that work is the great barrier between humanity and despair. Long ago I broke my wings against that stern wall and so had no strength left even for despair until by degrees it dawned on me that life to be perfect should hold something more than work, some rest deeper than that which comes from mere cessation

In an Attic

of toil. I have not found that something and that rest: they were never mine to hold and call my own—the faith that keeps life sweet, the sorrow that makes it strong, the love that makes it whole. But when hope burns brightly for a little hour and puts to shame the pale light of reason I have thought that in another world and time it may still be mine to know them all.

Complaint, it has always seemed to me, was a refuge for the weak, and a smileless face a gratuitous insult to the world at large. But to one's self in the inner silence of one's heart one talks the truth alone and faces the great issues of life, if not always with courage at least with an entire sincerity. And I have wondered are there many women in the world whose lives have been as colourless, monotonous, re-

In an Attic

strained as mine? The children in the alleys smile if they see me coming, and when they tuck their little hands in mine it keeps the iron from eating into my soul too deep and far. But I have cried out that this was not enough, cried out for something nearer, more personal, more dear, and thought how if I had had one only day of joy in life, nay, less than that, one hour in which to know the splendid magic of the thing that men call love, if but one of those kisses that burn and waste on other women's faces had once come near my own, if the clasp of strong arms had been about me, and dear whispered words stirred the soul within me to a measure of glorious life—that, then, by the light of such memories I could have toiled through all the years of gloom without a murmur or desire. But where

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I stand for a minute pausing over the form of my life laid low, looking behind it I see only the desert, joyless, shadeless, arid, and before it, on the near horizon, the long darkness of the coming night.

Little behind and less before. Since, in the other times, I remember sweet bird-like flashes of hope that some day love and joy would find their way up the dingy stairs to where my attic was, and how I planned to cherish always my old work-basket and my desk, the threadbare rug and the well-worn chair, poor mute witnesses of the richness that was to be mine, and how in these unreasonable moments my arms would open out in sudden ecstasy to the best thing God can send a woman, and close again with slow tears on nothingness. The tears are dried away and there is no more hope. There

In an Attic

are wrinkles on my brow, a faded colour in my cheeks, and the light has gone from my hair and eyes : another hand is on the latch, and the love that tarried so long in coming will never now find out the way.

Sometimes in my wickedness I have been tempted to wish that in life's long greyness there had been one stain of scarlet sin to weep over and work atonement for, some unholy love to trample underfoot, some anguish of loss or separation to make one hour of life rich and red and real, and remembered then that asking sorrow was the same as asking joy : that they being knit together in mysterious mystic union he who has not tasted of the one may hardly know the other. And so it is that those angels of Sorrow and of Love, whose coming brings such healing and uplifting

In an Attic

to the hearts of men, have passed me by without one brush of their bright wings —the sorest personal grief, perhaps, that I have known, was when a little dog died, which I rescued, down a blind alley, from a crowd of children who were misusing it.

There was a woman who once lived on the floor below. No man called her his wife, but the divinest love was stamped upon her face, and at her breast she held a little baby. In the nights I would listen to her walking up and down her floor with it, soothing its childish ailments with the sweet foolish lullabies that are so meaningless to all without the pale of motherhood. Then I would get up and open my little window on to the hushed traffic of the city world below, and try and shake off the torpor of desolation into

In an Attic

which my soul was sinking. The stars would be shining over Westminster and the Thames, and the air all heavy laden with that sense of vastness and of softness which takes the sting from the wounds of earth and inspires the soul to endure yet a little while: and I would try and lose myself in the influences of the hour, try and see how, even in extremest loneliness and silence, life may be beautiful, patient, pure. Then I would hear the mother's voice below, and know that all the effort and philosophy of life are vain when a little human love is near.

The baby died. One hot Sunday afternoon I met the tiny coffin being carried down the stairs. The mother was holding it in her arms. She would let no stranger touch it. The next day I met her on the stairs again and my hands went out to hers.

In an Attic

Once or twice before we had stopped thus for a passing word, in the pauses of our busy lives, as people in London do.

“What shall I say to comfort you?” I whispered to her as we held each other with our eyes. In her face, under all the agony, the great love was shining—aye, and must be shining still, wherever and whatever she may be. What she saw in mine I know not, but, once or twice in the world, it may happen that a woman understands a woman, and when I think of that long look of radiant compassion the distance between herself and me is white with the soundless feet of angels.

“Not so, dear woman,” it said, “not so. But if *I* could comfort *you*!”

And she kissed me. I have never seen her since. I fancy she could not live where the little one had died.

In an Attic

After she went I fell to thinking how it would have gone with me had I had someone to work for, something to make all the struggle and the soreness of the days as nothing for the sweetness that was waiting at their close, and in my folly I imagined that a little child was coming, a fragile thing born of love and of myself, that the world would despise as an outcast, which only made my joy the deeper, knowing that to me alone would it turn for consolation and understanding. So real did this imagining become to me that in the evenings when I went home I would turn the handle of the door softly—oh, so softly—for fear of troubling that baby sleep: and once in the city I came suddenly on an old man at a corner who had a great basket of dewy cowslips to sell. (I don't know why, but cowslips always seemed to me the

In an Attic

children's flower of flowers.) "Oh, please," I said, "a bunch,—two, three bunches," and then, as though to excuse my eagerness — "for cowslip balls—you know,—the—baby—will be so happy—."

One evening, when the irony and helplessness of life were hanging very heavily upon me, I put away that little baby of my mind and wept scorching tears for a sorrow that was never mine. Yet now, where I sit, alone in the toils of the shadow of death, I seem to feel once more the clasp of tiny fingers round my own, and the dearest of small voices lisping baby comfort in my ear.

Quite lately, in answer to my earnest request for the whole truth, a great specialist told me that my case was hopeless, that both sides of the heart were badly affected,

In an Attic

that the end might chance at any moment. He recommended a quiet place by the sea, to keep free from excitement, and do absolutely nothing. I thanked him very much, paid his fee, and left him to work a little harder than before. It is only the idle and the rich who may complain of poverty.

And now, where I sit alone in the shadows, thinking, I know that the end is drawing swiftly near. A few more dawns, a few more misty eves, a little pain, and then the long, dreamless sleep of whose waking no man may tell with certainty, since the lips of those on whom it fell have been sealed throughout the ages, and only here and there the eye of faith has seen in visions what to grosser sight has been denied.

There is a loneliness which is very lonely,

In an Attic

and it is surging round my soul to-night. My goodbyes are mostly to the inanimate things of earth, and I find it hard to keep my eyes from fastening without tears on the city spires, the lighted tall clock-tower, the bridges, the Abbey turrets seen dimly through the driving rain, the little pot of mignonette upon the table, the books upon the shelf, the countless things that spoke to me when all other voices were for other ears. I must leave them all and go I know not where. To live alone may make one strong—it should—but to die alone is to stretch out hands of longing in the darkness.

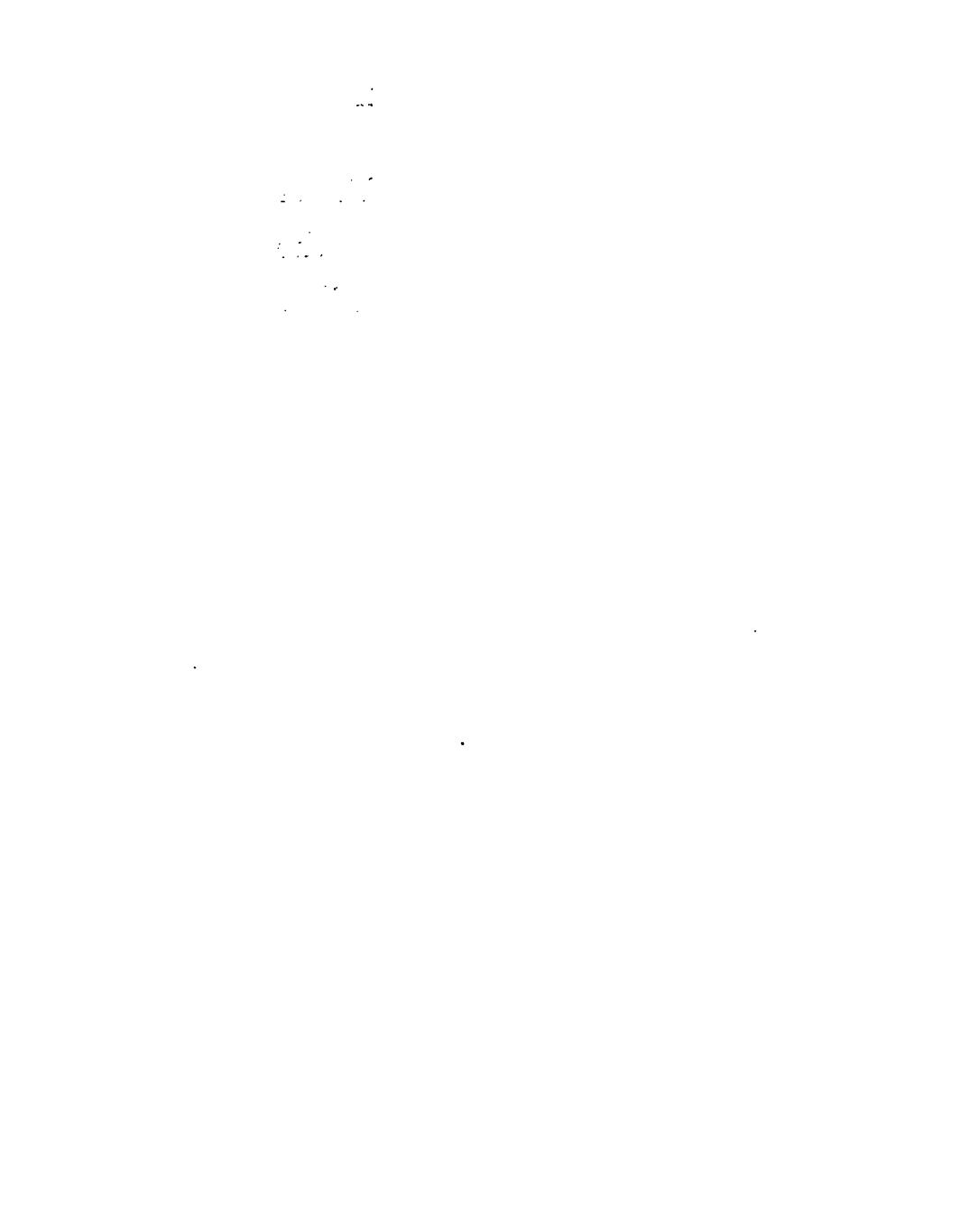
Moreover, I am not sure of the welcome (if any) that awaits me at the journey's end, I who was wont to say that I would barter all the prospective joys of heaven for an hour of human love on earth. But still my

In an Attic

thoughts will stray beyond the rain-clouds
QC and the hidden stars to the things I learnt
as a little child, to One whose name, they
said, was love, who knowing all will all for-
give.

II

Under
the
Lilacs



ONE morning I had a letter, only a very commonplace little note, to say that he was coming in the evening, and that he hoped we could have a good long talk alone. All that day, while my feet were soberly pacing the boarded walks through the village or the sanded path round the lake, they were really dancing out of sheer delight to a beautiful spirited measure born of the sunshine and the morning, the scent of the lilacs—and the commonplace little note.

Such a glamour there was over the face of the earth that day, which for all its sweetness, was one of the longest I have known: such golden mists creeping

Under the Lilacs

up from the ocean through the pine woods,
such tremulous whispers among the trees,
such songs of birds, such gladness of
rejoicing—oh, don't you know the sort
of day I mean, when the spring is married
to the summer, with the blessing of the
sunshine round them both, and a hundred
little busy voices spreading the dear tidings
far and wide. The wide grass paths, too,
were all flecked with pink and white, as
with every sigh of wind a shower of
blossoms came shaking down from the
almond and the chestnut and the cherry
trees. I shall never find that day again,
unless, perhaps, when I lie dying, and it
comes back to me once more in dreams.

I watched the sun climb higher and
higher and at last turn down again.
When it reaches the tops of the pines,
I said, it will be twilight time, and he

Under the Lilacs

will come. I had no right to be so expectant and so glad. We were nothing to each other, as the world would say, the world that sees at once so little and so much. Though I loved him with all my heart, and felt that he loved me with all his own, there was no seal of betrothal between us, no word of marriage had been once upon his lips. We were such deep friends, that I grew to love that silence of his. I put it down to some early tragedy, some obstacle, some hurt that time might heal, or that, it might be, death alone could still the ache of. It seemed to give romance, delicacy, a certain indescribable exaltation and charm to the feeling there was between us. When one has lived and moved much in the world, one gets to be somewhat of an epicure in matters of love, don't you think?

Under the Lilacs

Shame on us that it should be so! Anyhow I could have been quite content to love and to be loved, in that divine silence till the end of time. It involved such a wholesome trust, the trust a woman gives so readily and so entirely when she loves, and however much trust may be abused, one is always so much the better for trusting, so much the better for being trusted.

I put on a white frock that evening, and lilacs in my satin belt. I watched the hotel stage come sweeping round the drive to the main entrance, and looked for him beside the driver, where he generally sat. But, instead, a very round and rubicund old man was there, and after the first wonder, I smiled to think that someone else inside had given up his seat, perhaps, to that old man. Because the

Under the Lilacs

last time we were together, we had had an argument on this very question of preferring another before one's self in little matters of places and so forth. He had not agreed with me at all. "But," he had said, "for your sake, I shall sacrifice my principles, and the very next time the chance to do so comes my way, I shall promptly give up my seat to the first old lady or gentleman who happens to be worse provided than myself; for your sake, you understand. And should they thank me—which is doubtful—I shall think of you and I shall say: 'Pardon me, not at all! But I shall have much pleasure in conveying your message to the proper quarter.' Then they will stare hard at me for a harmless lunatic—all for your sake, you understand."

That was the way we generally settled

Under the Lilacs

our little differences. Do you know a better?

One by one I watched the inside people file out from the stage, the bell-boys snatching up their small pieces of baggage and ushering them up the steps, but he was not there. And that hideous cold sick feeling, which hurts like a physical pain when a sudden dismay comes to wreck the fineness of one's joy, crept over me, while I felt myself slowly growing rigid under its distressful influence. It was a feeling quite new to me, but I think no pity can be too deep for those on whom it often waits. Indeed, I have heard that more lives than we can think of are marred and maimed, not by great tribulation, but by being constantly at the mercy of some trifling worry—the daily expectation, for instance, of a letter that never comes, a

Under the Lilacs

footstep that never falls, a word that is never spoken, a smile that is never smiled; the daily shrinking before a small unkindness that is ever present.

But on that sweet evening when I stood waiting, wondering, turning my eyes away from the little lesson of hardness set for me to learn, even then, in the distance I saw him coming, his long leisurely swing bearing across the close-cropped sward, his eyes scanning the terraces and piazzas with the quiet deliberation peculiarly his own. My feet were tingling to be off and meet him, but I did not let them stray, for the thousand windows of a hotel are like so many careless curious eyes, under whose gaze one does not thrust one's self unnecessarily. When still some way off he smiled up at me, and for the dearness of that smile, which lay like a ladder of light

Under the Lilacs

between us, typical of the wordless bright relation in which we stood to one another, I could have wished the distance twice as far.

“ Well ! ” he said, after the first greeting, “ I trust to have done the eminently proper thing this time. The coach was crammed to bursting ; someone simply had to walk, and a still small voice within—was it yours ? —said : ‘ Thou ! Thou art the man ! ’ Moreover, as I so gravely suspected, I haven’t been thanked yet. Am I to be spared a piece of that lilac ? We might then consider things squared.”

“ Joking apart, though,” he said, as we crossed the hall, “ I was glad of the walk. New York’s on toast to-day. All previous records are nowhere, I believe. There wasn’t a coat to be seen on Fifth Avenue, and staid respectable old city fathers and

Under the Lilacs

grandfathers were to be seen perspiring down Broadway in their shirt-sleeves, and as much of those as possible tucked away. All the world up there lies groaning, except, perhaps, the iced cocktail dealers and the palm-leaf fan fakirs, who would appear to be flourishing exceedingly. By the way, I brought you down a fan—and left it in the car, with one or two other good intentions. *How have you been?*"

The talk was the light talk of a man of the world, but the tone was full of caresses, and I remember so stupidly, so blindly, so exactly, each shade of both that fell to me that night. We went in to dinner alone, Aunt Mary having told me before, with such an understanding smile on her dear white face, that she would be dining with the nurse in her own rooms. After dinner I ran up to her for a little moment:

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"Going out, dear?" she asked me; "that's right. Even if the poor man hadn't been stewing in an office all day, I should say it was the only thing to do on such an evening. You'll have the new moon rising over the lake—or sinking, is it? And the magnolias and the lilacs too. Now, don't waste any time on me. I shall be as well taken care of as you yourself. Could anyone ask for more than that!"

A little tremor shot through me as she spoke, and a sudden swift reluctance to go downstairs again. I cannot explain it at all, unless it is that sensitive souls may sometimes see what to simpler ones is happily denied. We were alone, and a great sweetness was in the room. The perfumed wind just lightly shook the curtains, the shaded lamp sent out its rich warm glow over the saintly face which,

Under the Lilacs

next to one (by no means saintly), I loved best in the world. The quiet room seemed full of the innocence, the charity, the loving-kindness that breathed out from that face.

"Kiss me," I said, kneeling by her chair, "kiss me, and listen: let us sit with you here instead of going out. I know Jim won't mind in the very least. He's always so ready . . ."

"My dear, dear girl! Don't think of such a thing. Not for an instant would I let it be. And why that very solemn face? When you look like that, I always think of your father who had wanted to call you Joy and of your dear dying mother who said "I would rather, I think, that it was HONOR, Jack." And so, Honor it was. Honor alone."

I wondered why she had never told me

Under the Lilacs

of that before and said so. Then again I begged her—without knowing why I begged her—to let us stay with her, but all in vain, she wouldn't hear of it. Had “poor” Jim come, she argued, all the way from the fiery city to be stewed up in an invalid's sitting-room for the evening? She was surprised at me, she really was—so unlike my usual consideration, and so forth. Whereupon, without more ado, I flung aside my strange misgivings and presently went down to him, and to hear his glad voice was like waking up in the morning sunshine after an unhappy dream.

“That's right,” he said. “Have you got a wrap? Now come and show me that there are better things in the world than even the best of coffee, chartreuse and cigars.”

Under the Lilacs

As we walked through the halls the
band in the sun-corridor was playing one
of the *Vieilles Chansons* of the east:

“ If my darling should depart,
And search the skies for prouder friends,
God forbid my angry heart
In other love should seek amends.

When the blue horizon’s hoop
Me a little pinches here,
Instant to my grave I stoop,
And go find thee in the sphere.”

We stayed for a few moments to listen
and then went out into the dark delicious
night, our feet keeping step to the old-
time measure and in our heads its quaint
impassioned music ringing.

“ I am never merry when I hear sweet
music, Honor; are you?” said Jim,
flippantly, as we struck off for the little

Under the Lilacs

pine-shadowed path that girds the lake around. The night was oh, so soft, and dark, and rich with scent, the air like velvet on one's face. There were no stars that I can remember printed on all the deep-violet heavenly stretches that seemed so high above the earth that night, but just beyond the tallest tree-tops hung the clear-cut crescent of the young moon Aunt Mary had so thoughtfully alluded to. We stood still to watch how the silver fire burnt its way far down into the bosom of the lake, like a shining love-thought that finds anchor in a steadfast heart; and then there clove the stillness the ringing note of the whippoorwill, the little bird of ill-omen and such unsurpassing melody.

"Now why did you shiver?" asked Jim, with a touch of impatience in his

Under the Lilacs

voice; "the people of the place hear that bird every night in the summer for weeks on end, and they seem a well-favoured enough lot on the whole."

He took my arm and held my hand in his and we wandered on in the silence and the firefly-lighted gloom till we reached the quaintly carved bark-roofed bridge where the laurels and the magnolias and the sentinel pines keep ward behind, with the waters of the lake rustling softly up in front.

And the long silence of our love was broken there at last.

I can hear them now one after the other, those sweet, wild words which marked with inextinguishable light that hour of my life whose memory in spite of all may be with me still, I pray, when I lie dying and far away from the voice

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that spoke them on that early summer night.

“Honor!” he said, “my Honor!” and for a long time there was no other sound between us, and all my soul was inhabited with the deep, unutterable rest that comes of perfect joy.

“Honor! My own dear Honor! How long is it since we have known each other? And yet it seems to me that I have never said your name until to-night.”

“Honor, my Honor! Will your dear smile be just the same for me when in two minutes’ time I tell you all that is in my heart concerning our joint lives?”

And so on, in the faintly lighted world, with the fire-flies dancing, shooting, quivering here and there in points of radiance among the magnolias and pines. Do you know how in old Italian folk-lore it ran

Under the Lilacs

that fire-flies were just the embodied crystallised words of love which float in magic wealth around the pleasant places of that southern land. Some gentle-hearted angel caught the burning words as they fell, and transmuted them into the tiny flashing stars of gold. By which it happens that however dark and still, the night need be never voiceless when the fire-flies are around.

Then,—I must say it shortly if I can,—my dear one with his arms about me and his kisses on my face, he told me that he would not marry me because he disbelieved in marriage as far as Church or State had anything to do with it — absolutely and entirely. Was I brave enough, great enough to trust and love him always as he for years had loved me, myself alone, and waited till he thought the hour had

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come when he at last might tell me so?
Would we not live for and with and to each
other whilst love and life should last? And
why should our love, free and unfettered,
not last through all of life, as chained, as
it were compulsory love so rarely did?

I may scarcely tell you of the arguments
he used, so selfish, shallow, hollow, worth-
less would they doubtless seem to you.
The burden of them all was this: I
will keep no woman to myself by any tie
than that of love. This is my fixed, un-
alterable decision based on knowledge of
life, the world, the age, and woman.

And ever and again in the darkness like
the cut of a whip came those words:
“Honor, my darling, I cannot marry you.”
It seemed at first to me, drowned as I was
in the brightness of that newly-told love, a
small thing whether we married or whether

Under the Lilacs

we did not. It was enough of bliss to love and to be loved again.

But when he kissed me, when taking my face he kissed me with all his soul upon his lips, and between his kisses said continually, "Come, my darling, come!" then something at my heart seemed to slowly break. I had no courage. I did not stir. I only lay very still in his arms, for I knew that after that night I should hear his voice no more.

In the long silence of that close embrace my vision set on edge with pain grew wonderfully clear and strong again, and I saw as in a procession the misery, the honour, the pathos and the light of life, the things that may and the things that may not be, those that entrance and those that perplex so sorely the wayfarer set in their troubled midst. Above all, I saw how

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out of the chaos and the recklessness of ancient social orders there slowly formed and crystallised that wise and shining law which, for all it is so badly used, so pitifully abused, is yet the anchorage on which the greatest number have found the greatest rest, the greatest joy ; and how that he or she who dares to trespass against that law does treachery to the State, dishonour to himself, and it may be fast incurable ill to his fellow-man.

I hated myself in that I saw these things with such a clear-cut sharpness. In my heart of hearts I cried out for blindness, blindness that would hold me for ever close to my beloved, seeing no harm or injury, either present or to come, content to look through his eyes only, and to find my delight of life in that which he called right.

Under the Lilacs

And still the more I prayed for blindness
the clearer grew my sight.

“Honor, my darling,” he said between
his kisses, “believe me, the true marriage
will be ours.”

I could not say. For that matter I
cannot now. For it seems so well and
brave in youth when the fires of love burn
brightly to talk of love unlinked by con-
ventional chains, love standing alone with
the loved one, thinking lightly of the
world’s contumely, being true and lovely
all the same. But when the sands of life
run low, when the curfew is sounding over
the fields at twilight and darkness gathering
slowly in the sky, where will Joan and
Darby be? Will they be always hand
in hand walking down together towards
the rest which still remains? When
passion’s wings have flown then, without

Under the Lilacs

the solemn sweet security of marriage, will
the love that has loved so much still to
the end stand fast?

I whispered to him that my thoughts
were not as his thoughts. I tried to tell
him, though it was with smiles that ended
ignominiously, that marriage after all was
but a well-bred amiable concession to the
poor well-meaning world at large. But
I had no courage to tell him the deeper
thoughts that came to me of the exceeding
sorrowfulness and selfishness involved in
the walking down that broader way he
thought so well: of the little children,
it may be, born into this cruel world
without the shelter of a father's name:
of the awful influence of example whereby
a weaker soul rushes in where the strongest
only walked with fearfulness and many a
hidden sore misgiving.

Under the Lilacs

His pleading grew very pitiful: "Honor," he said, "I do not believe in God. I've tried to believe in God. I can't believe in God. Listen. If you will be all the world to me as one woman only to one man only, *I will believe in God.*"

For some long time after that, when I saw the name of God written about on tombstones, books and papers, I turned away from it shuddering and sick.

I have not seen him since that hour. At times when some influence of the day or night lifts up my heart to throb with a forbidden joy, and I, forgetting all, think of Love in the intimate personal way a woman does, it seems to me still, as it seemed just then, that there can be no love like married love, no rest like the rest of a marriage where love is. . . .

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III

**On
the
Eve
of
Departure**

**"I clear away my wounded, slain,
With strength like frenzy, wild and swift,
I do not heed the tug and strain
Though dead are heavy, hard to lift,
If I looked on their faces dying
I could not keep my colours flying."**

(**"A Woman's Battle."**)

How light it is! The world, as I see it from my window, is drunk with sunshine. Over the sleeping houses of the city it is as though a golden benediction were streaming down from invisible censers swinging in the morning sky. In the country it would have been very fair to-day, with the pale mauve lights breaking through the glens and sending long shadows over the highway of the sea. But I may not think of my little home there, hidden away in the deep heart of the forest-land, under the solemn walnut trees, with the high hedge of clipped yews and the paths between the lavender and holly-hocks, and the deep carved porch with

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the old-fashioned motto over it, "Come in and take thy rest," or, it might be, that even at the eleventh hour my strength and nerve would fail me for the long and lonely journey that lies before us. Everything is ready for departure. The room is in perfect order, fresh and sweet, as I like to think that it still will be when I am gone, with the roses on the table and the books against the wall. There are many hours to wait, for it is only now the dawn and we do not start till evening-time. It is not often that I have been ready for a journey so long beforehand, but there are weighty reasons for no haste or hurry attaching to the special one I have in mind. Besides, the hours will go all too quickly for the things I have to set down here ere the twilight darkness comes: I see the long sweet day before

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me charged with labour if all is to be told as I would wish it should be done. Curiously enough, with this gold-pink bloom of dawn hovering over the city, this rush of light and song sweeping slowly in where the shadows and the silence of the night have been, I feel only a desperate weariness, a silly longing for soft pillows, kind arms and a sleep that shall stretch on, on, through all the stir and sunshine of the summer day, not even waking when the twilight falls and the world grows still again. But these are not courageous thoughts. I seem to have forgotten that on the journey there will be time enough and to spare for idleness and sleeping.

I find it so difficult to begin, so difficult to shut out from my eyes the great city which has sheltered with such loyal secrecy

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my happiness and my distress, the great city that has never seemed unsympathetic to me, but rather like some dear large-hearted woman, strong to forgive and swift to understand, when I think of all the radiant loves, the merry children, the brave aims, the shattered hopes, the broken trusts, the maimed and crucified lives of those who daily tread its pavements and call it Home. There in the distance is Westminster raising its proud towers into the gold dust of the morning shine, and away to the right the long beams are slanting across the roof of St George's Hospital on to the tops of the great elms in the park, and a hundred pointing spires are bidding heedless hearts to look up and be lifted higher, and the air is heavy laden with the poetry and the mystery that breathe from common things.

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On such a day one could sit at one's window making little wordless poems to one's self from the morning till the evening. But on the waiting white sheets at hand a crowd of words must be, and the stringing of these together will make no poem, only broken verses, snatches of a song of life where, at the last stanzas, the voice may grow faint and fail; when, maybe, God, Who being Love, forgiveth all, will take the fragments up and set them to clearer music in another sphere.

Once upon a time then, as the old tales began, the old tales that always ended happily as the new ones never seem to do, there lived in a cottage set deep in a sheltered hollow near the head of a glorious combe, a tiny maiden and her nurse. A wholesome thing and rich with

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joy was the upbringing of that child. Tumbling in the hay in the sun-flooded summer fields ; crowned with flowers as the small princess of May ; looking for the robins' nests under the apple bloom in the orchard hedge ; mounted high on the top-most sheaf of the corn-laden waggon, singing with the reapers the songs of harvest home ; or, in the wonderful white winter-time, trying with nervous wilful little feet the steep frozen stream that ran down through the glen, breaking the ice-crystals off the shed where the swallows built, and sucking them till they melted in her mouth —at all times a happy, venturesome, untidy morsel of humanity. In the long evenings when the world outside was dark and frost-bound, and all the light and warmth was held imprisoned in the hissing glowing pile of logs upon the hearth, she would

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wander far and wide in the world of books ; would ride over shining plains by the side of armed warriors and rescue lonelier little maidens than herself from the impossible things that childhood holds so brightly possible ; taking full advantage of the almost perfect liberty granted her in the matter of reading ; before she was eleven knowing the greater part of the Idylls of the King by heart, and having the brave pages of Ivanhoe, Froissart's Chronicles, and many a golden record more winging their way continually through the corridors of her bright and busy brain ; listening eagerly to Nurse's tales, the thrilling legends, the romances that she wove in with the folk-lore of the country-side ; creeping up to bed with flushed cheeks and beating heart on Nurse's arm, to dream again of palm-strewn highways,

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exiled heroes, and women sweet, of ministering angels and a Lord of love, of wrong defeated and right most fairly crowned. Always amongst the first of fascinations to that little one was the great and magic sea. The foresters and toilers of the field would smile the time of day at her as they watched her speeding through the sheltered glens, standing on the high cliff path, her curls and her white frock caught by the strong west wind that mostly blows along that shore, lifting herself here and there on tip-toe to peer above the tall bracken guarding the outside edge of the path for glimpses of the steamers and schooners passing out to the rich ocean-heart beyond, while the long trails of foam glittering, shivering in their wake seemed to her like the crystallised tears of those on board for those left weeping behind at home.

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She did sharp battle with herself for that absorbing worship of the sea, and at times a vague self-reproach would over-cloud her joy, as in one who had bestowed her heart on the chief enemy of her house. For down below, not three hundred yards from the shore, where sudden winds and treacherous currents sweep round from the point, a sailing-boat once capsized and without a moment's warning its two occupants were sucked into swift and bitter death. In the tiny churchyard, hidden away so deeply in the heart of the glen that in the winter the sun never shines on it at all, there is a granite slab with a gold-lettered verse which tells of these two that—

“They were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided.”

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And when the little maiden, who was their only child, grew old enough to understand her loss she called the great sea cruel, though later on, when she knew life better, she called it kind.

On this early radiant morning when I look back through the mists of thirteen years and see that quaint small maiden dancing down the wind-blown paths, the strong joy of sea and sun entering in and tuning her heart to such rare felicity, she is so real to me that I can almost feel her standing by my side, and I stretch my arms and hold her closely to me, hiding on her shoulder the tear-blind eyes that cannot choose but drop before her innocent generous gaze.

Not for a moment would I have had her other than she was, whose sun and love-stored life was all a Hope with never

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the shadow of a fear. For that little maiden was myself.

I think of the gaiety of heart that was so supremely hers, the magic response to all the joy that lay in the freedom of the woods, the songs of the birds, the star-worlds swimming in the pale green sky when the sun was down, and though I know that, in obedience to a strange enigmatic law, every joy worth calling such is paid for in blood-red coins of pain, yet I would have had her in no way other than she was, her sensibility one whit the less for all things fair and sweet that in the after days it might have been so too for the things of agony and sore distress.

Against my broken heart I feel her child-heart beating high with wonder, as to what her part will some day be in the world beyond the waters that her Nurse

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and her dear books tell her of: against my heavy eyes I feel the warmth and shine of hers, with all the wealth of imprisoned sunlight glancing from their solemn depths: upon my widowed mouth I feel her kisses raining fast. . . . I am saying to her, "Bid me Godspeed, dear, Godspeed on the journey," and I see her eyes grow pitiful, but her answer is drowned, choked, in the mists of the years that lie between.

The sun is climbing the lilac sky and the morning hours are speeding fast. One or two people going to the first service have just passed down the street. I, too, would fain go out and, from some dim corner, watch in the silence and pray that courage may fall upon me. But it is not for me. I may not lift my voice in the

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grand sweet sanctus with those of angels,
archangels, and all the company of heaven.
Among the white-souled saints I may not
tread, I, over whose soul the shadow of
the stain of blood already lies.

Down the far-back years when that
small maiden, whom I now can scarcely
think was once myself, had grown in
solitude amid the dusky woods to woman's
proud estate there was a Sunday too, and
I remember that it was a time of showers
in the land: for rain-drops sparkled on
the pine-needles and bowed the heads of
the long grasses in the forest path, and
God had set His flaming mystic bow
across the clouds. I was putting wild
flowers on the grave where my father and
mother lie, for Nurse had often told me
of their love for these, and on that after-

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noon my hands were full of cornflowers, harebells, moss, and speedwell, and suddenly, as I was working with them by the grave, I looked up and a man, whose face I had never seen before, was leaning over the low wall watching me intently.

Under his deliberate scrutiny I felt the blood leap hotly to my face, and the cool rain fell, first gently, then in large storm-drops. I knew that if I did not run in quickly Barbara would come out and call me, for she never remembered that I was not a child, and as, somehow, I did not want this to happen before the stranger, I made very soon to go in of my own accord. To do this I had to pass quite close to where he stood, and when I was almost at his elbow he gave me a grave salute, and apologising, asked me if he was on the road to Silchester. I told him how

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long and far the way was, by which time the rain was falling down in torrents. At our garden door, which is exactly opposite the yew-hidden churchyard gate, I turned again to him. He was still standing by the wall with indecision in his eyes. To any other soul I would have said it cheerfully, or, at least, without hesitation, but I felt the nervousness in my voice as I asked him if he would like to come across to the cottage for a little shelter, seeing how long and heavy the showers were, and that there was no other place of refuge near.

A second or two later, he was following me up the slanting flagged path, over which the incense from the steaming flowers lay heavily. So well I remember it all, that I can even feel to-day how light my heart was then. In the porch,

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her snow-white curls standing out primly under her snow-white cap, stood Nurse, reproach on her lips, and a large cloth in her hands. She welcomed the stranger with the quaint unquestioning hospitality that cannot be in cities, while me she carried off in triumph for a change of raiment—my mute protests all and utterly unavailing. But in a few moments she sent me down to him again, cosy, dry, in thick white serge, with a blue sash at the waist. May I be excused if I seem to be recording trivialities? Nothing of those days is trivial to me now, when my feet are steadfastly set to the desolate journey, when I shall need dear Barbara and my pretty things no more.

He was standing at the fireplace, with his hands behind his back, and the world-weary look which I had noticed first upon

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his face had somehow slipped away. The room was full of scent and shadows, but a bright glow shone from the wood fire piled up between the brass dogs on the hearth. Here in this vast rich London, I have never seen a room like that of mine at home, with the low-beamed ceiling and the square lattice and the corners so quaintly made for study or for ease.

We exchanged our names, Robert Thellusson and Violet Challis Hay—and even then as we began to talk, a jagged lightning flash tore the gloom asunder, a violent peal of thunder troubled the deep stillness of the glens, the storm in all its fury raged around, and a great blackness came down between us. It was like nothing I have known before or since. Barbara came with a taper and lit the tall candles on the narrow mantleshelf,

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and drew the heavy curtains between us and the blue blinding flashes, that every now and then smote the velvety darkness of the woods. She brought the tea-tray in, and I watched her arranging the service for two, and when this gentle work was done she turned the kindness of her eyes upon us, saying that the gentleman must not think of going forth again on his travels, without so much as a breath of tea in his body, while the kettle was boiling on Miss Violet's hearth.

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One evening, a few weeks later, when the shadows in the garden were growing long, I called Barbara to me there, and told her that I was going away, and that I could not take her with me as on all our journeys heretofore. As I spoke I

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turned my face from hers, And I can hear her silence now.

I told her that some day I should come back again. It might be soon and it might be long, but some day I should come back again. This I told her not once, or twice, but repeatedly, emphatically, for comfort in what I knew her grief to be, for cover of the harshness of the blow I dealt.

And two summers' suns have risen and set since then, and I have not been back to Barbara, and now I never shall, though in loneliness she waits for me with dim eyes straining down the path between the violets, where she whispered hoarsely to me on the morning that I went away:

*"East or West
Home is Best."*

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I have been sleeping, dreaming, idling, thinking that I, in very truth, was back with Barbara, walking round the garden paths with her, calling all the sweet flowers by their names, listening to Billy, the thrush with the white feather in his tail, who sings always in the old pear-tree on the lawn, and who, it may be, is singing there to-day with Barbara listening to him; but her step is feeble and every now and then her eyes grow dim, for she must walk and listen all alone.

It is a quarter to eleven and the sun is high. Barbara has put her white shawl on and is holding her big prayer book with the silver clasps, which it used to be my honour and delight to carry for her as a little child to church. She is walking by the flowers, the hollyhocks, the hydrangeas, the lavender, and mignonette,

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the tall white lilies and the yellow roses,
the long low border of sweet violets at
their feet; the violets that Barbara tended
and loved so well for my name's sake, the
lilacs and the flaming fiery tongues keeping
guard at the gate—the soldier flowers we
used to call those last. Soon she will be
in the shadow of the churchyard cedars.
At the grave she will stop for a moment
and look to see that the flowers are fresh
and fair, and then she will pass from the
sunshine into the faint light of the holy
place where it always seems to Barbara
that God is nearest to His own. In the
little pew where for years of Sundays we
sat together hand in hand she must now and
always sit alone. . . . O Barbara, praying
there for me the lost one, whom you call
only absent, O Barbara, when your dear lips
move if even heedlessly in the supplication:

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For all in danger, necessity, and tribulation, for all who travel by land or water, all women labouring of child. . . . may it please the Lord to hear your voice in heaven and send down mercy at the last.

So I left Barbara and my sweet home to tread the way of life beside the man I had learnt to love immeasurably above the highest thing that earth can name.

"How much would you dare for me?" he had asked me one day in the woods where, after that first wild wet Sunday, we were often wont to meet and wander. I told him, slowly, "Everything," and I knew that all my life was wrapped up in that word; knew that henceforth I, Violet Challis Hay, the last member of a proud and stainless race, should be his, body, soul and spirit, against every law

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of society, religion, the land, and it might be, God Himself: knew that by his side I would walk with light and fearless footsteps over the roughest places that the world can make for those who wound its susceptibilities in a tender spot: counting the scorn and slight of others gain and joy so they won me an extra embrace from my most loved one.

The trust I had in him was boundless, wordless, a thing diviner, deeper in its way perhaps than the very love that filled my life. To-day in my extremity I cling for a moment to the memory of the perfect heart-rest wrought by that perfect trust.

I knew him to be cynical, ambitious, worldly, but the knowledge no more affected my love for him than cloudlets which enhance rather than dim the glory of a summer day. I used often to think

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just then of some words I had once learnt by heart in a book I was reading: "Muscular principles are sown only out in the world; and on the whole, with all their errors, the worldly men are the truest as well as the bravest of men."

Away, fast locked in a place where they shelter the poor insane, was the woman whom years before the law had made his wife.

"You cannot injure her, my darling, you cannot," he had whispered again and again to me. "Though she may linger on for years her lot is always now with those the dead in life. Experts innumerable have pronounced her recovery to be hopeless."

And I used to shiver at his voice, in which not a note of love or pity or remembrance lingered. But he would

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only hold me faster with all the passion of a strong man in his grasp until I would forget that living corpse that lay between us, forget even Barbara and the sweetness of my solitary life beside her own, to dream of greater sweetesses, a richness of existence, a delight of being, a luxury of suffering which things if they are not taught a woman by the man she loves, I still think in my agony she were better to be unborn.

So I came. Of the long strange hours of inward strife and wonder, of the uprooting of my heart-strings one by one from the things that had been mine from childhood, of the sudden nameless terror that swept over me when Barbara, knowing nothing, yet blind with weeping, pressed me to her for the last time of

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all, it is not needful now to write. I used to sit for hours in the garden looking at the trees, the sky, the flowers, before the day came when I left them at the imperial call of love, love that knew no wrong and feared no shame, love that gave everything and asked for nothing in return, love that trusted utterly and humbled itself to the very dust, that the loved one might, as it thought, be blest; beautiful love, the gift of God, the never-to-be-fathomed sweet mystery that, wherever it passes through the weary world, takes healing with it and the magic which none can name; splendid love, at whose altar I laid my all, knowing full well what I did, deaf to the teaching of the patient saints, heeding not the terrible responsibility which the future levies always on the present.

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So I came. Though I might not share his name I shared his worries, work, ambitions, and his pains. For he lived and moved in the glare and stress of public life and the eyes of a country were on him as one of the rising politicians of the day, and in the morning papers it was often my eager glory to read of him as one who had "arrived," and of whom a little world expected some day great things. Though I might not shake the hands of his friends or find welcome among any that he knew, all the more was he mine in those rare hours when the world and his work claimed him no more. Whatever the vexations or the triumphs of the day it was mine, mine only, in the shadows of the night to open out my arms and say: "Lie here, dear heart and rest." And in this bitter

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hour I thank God Who for a little space
let these things be.

And now the glory has departed and
though high noon tide blazes on the land,
I only know that it is dark and strange
and very cold. We are alone, my little
child unborn and I, and soon we start
together on the journey where there is
none to say "Godspeed," and no likely
word of welcome or of greeting at the
other end.

One morning not four months, though
it seems four centuries ago, I read in
the papers the announcement of the
betrothal of Robert Thellusson to the
heiress of one of England's wealthiest
houses. Owing to the recent death in
the Northwood asylum of the bridegroom's
former wife, the wedding, it added, would

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take place very quietly in the autumn at the country seat of the bride's father.

I had not seen my dear one for many weary days, for he had been absent on a political campaign in the north, but that morning he came, and almost at once I pointed to the lines above, then waited smilingly for his annoyed disclaiming words.

"It is true," he said, "true in every particular. I came to break it more gently, but those stupid papers were too early for me."

I do not know how long it was before I answered him :

"Just now you . . . kissed me."

"Violet, for God's sake, don't look like that. It had to be. Did you think this sort of thing could go on indefinitely? At least let us part friends."

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"I told you . . . something . . . do you remember . . . the last time you were here?"

"O, don't let that worry you. You'll have every care and comfort. There'll be plenty of money—now."

A great horror froze my speech and then came darkness, swift and long and kind.

Have you ever felt the terrible weight of powerless despair? You weep, weep audibly like the distinct articulate weeping of a little child, and you feel your soul swimming away from you on great waves of loneliness out to a cruel sea, while your throbbing body leans heavily against the bed or table. You struggle to get outside the burning, quivering brain that holds you fast, and go after that poor lonely soul and call it back to shelter and the sense of

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human contact. But you cannot, you cannot. In its agony of desolation you cannot help your own soul.

Since then I have not seen him, and I have tried to think of him as one who once was loved and then for ever went away. Through the long, warm months I have been waiting, not knowing how I best could dree my weird, wishing to do nothing mad or desperate, nothing that would bring dread to Barbara's dim eyes or everlasting aching to her heart so loyal, and so tried. But I see no way of escape. Barbara must suffer, for I have sinned.

I never knew how real that sin was till my little child came to tell me so. Now in the shadow of death I see a fair light shining down a strait and narrow way, the only way, so God and the ages seem to say,

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down which a woman's footsteps may be guided without reproach or stumbling. But I, thinking indeed that I did well and bravely, took a broader way, and the rose leaves now are thorns, and a tiny child-face looks at me with piteous eyes and fingers pointing to a crown that rests upon its sunny curls and hurts the little head beneath—a crown of shame. And though I had the strength of all the strong ones of the world, I could not lift that crown away.

On the ashes of my former fallen love a new love mighty marvellous has risen. I, who may not be a mother, the foretaste of the mother's love is mine, for the sake of which all life's distress and loss seem well worth while.

Never have I clung to life as I am clinging to it now, I who shall not hear

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the evening bells again. Never did life show promise so tender and so fair as it does to-day when I must leave it and with my little child go far away, I know not where, I who forfeited all right and bliss of motherhood when I chanced the coming of that little child for whom the world would have continual torture only. Long long I seemed to grope in ignorance and darkness, half blind with fear and pain; until at last the gloom broke; there was a great calm; and clearly I saw the stern, inevitable end. Before that end which now draws very near, I shall not flinch. To-night we die, the child and I. Its little head shall never wear that heavy crown, its life not need to be one long forgiveness of the life that was nearest to its own.

But oh, most dear and small one, had you lived you might have grown into the

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fairest of women and some day have married a king amongst men, for that there are such I still know well. But even he, when his passion for you had subsided and it occurred to him to wonder at something in you, something he could not understand perhaps, he would put it down with an indulgence that would be an insult to what he considered the stigma on your birth.

Or you might have been a strong and goodly man and have chosen the dearest of women for your own: then some day a misunderstanding would arise and you would read perhaps in her eyes a scorn, a coldness that would hurt the manliness in you with a terrible hurt. For women so rarely know how to be entirely magnanimous.

And I cannot choose but weep over you,

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my darling, a last lament with burning tears, to think that I may never kiss your baby lips nor hold you to my breast, nor teach you charity and fearlessness and all the sweet and saintly things I would have had you know so well. But I may not dream in this wise, dear, or even now my courage will fail me to turn the key for ever on that future where you and I, alone and unheeded, we would have loved each the other so. But I sacrificed your future, sacrificed it without redemption on the morning that I turned away from Barbara and resolutely, of set purpose, went to find my best abiding-place in other arms than hers.

For which the day of reckoning now is here. What I am about to do that I must do. And if I might pray at all, I would pray that as I went out to love so I may go

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to die, without faltering, though not, it may
be, without fear.

On the table stand a bottle and a little
glass. When, a few minutes hence, I shall
have drained that small cup to the dregs,
then my baby will be free from the world's
wounding for evermore.

And so I may not stay: for the day is
growing dark: and my purpose holds to
sail beyond the sunset.

O Barbara! Barbara!

**Off
Arran's
Isle**

"Strew on her roses, roses,
And never a spray of yew;
In quiet she reposes,
Ah! would that I did too

Her mirth the world required,
She bathed it in smiles of glee;
But her heart was tired, tired,
And so they let her be.

Her cabin'd, ample spirit,
It flutter'd and failed for breath;
To-night it doth inherit
The vasty hall of death."

—MATTHEW ARNOLD.

AWAY in the loneliest part of Arran Island, where the heather hills slope steeply down to the shores of a spacious land-locked bay, a line of rocks, lying deep under water when the tide is up, leads out to the headland point which commands the western entrance to the bay. Before the point is reached a little cave is passed. Only by the rocks at low-water mark is it possible to get there at all, for above it the great cliffs tower steep and sheer into the air, defiantly and effectually opposing all thought of approach to it from the top.

There came one day to this little cave, for old sake's sake, one with whom in his

Off Arran's Isle

latter life it had gone hardly. As he lingered in the lonely spot, gentle memories came stealing one by one around him, and before he turned to go, he went to the far end of the cave, and with some small difficulty, and a smile at what he called his childishness, raised a large stone that happened to be there. Then, in a hollow space, beneath the stone, wondering greatly, he saw on the sandy yellow floor a little packet bound tightly, firmly up in a sheet of waterproof cloth. The cloth was still somewhat damp from where the sea had washed in by the edges of the stone. Slowly, with a strange grip at his heart, he pulled asunder the bands that bound it. Inside, he found a tin box about three inches high and seven by five perhaps in area. Pulling off the lid, he drew out a faded bunch of Parnassus grass tied round

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with a piece of pink cord, the manuscript of a story, and then—the leaves of what seemed to be a girl's diary. And by the mournful swell of the incoming tide, he read :—

September 1st.—He went yesterday. Shall I ever be again so that the seas, the birds, the heather hills, and God will be enough for me? How beautiful to live the life he lives! To drink in all the glory of the world, all the delight of days, all the sweetness of nights, all that is strange, or brave, or lovable in men and women, and to give it back again to the world which will not see these things, he told me, unless they are put before it in black and white, in the shape of what we call books.

We were talking far out on the rocks that night. "Some," he said, "get their

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first glimmer into the great secrets of life by contemplation of a picture—it may be only a simple study of a woman at a window looking out at a sail, away on the farthest sea. Some hear in music that which all other voices on earth are powerless to tell them. Most find in books the language which goes straightest to their hearts. Then, perhaps, they turn to life itself to tell them the rest—but only because the books first showed them how to do it. Yes! Books are very well—some of them—yet still the things that they will never hold, the things that never have been and never can be written, the things that cannot be spoken, scarcely looked or breathed, surely they are sweetest. Do you understand, dear?"

Three times in all he called me "dear." This was the first. It is a little simple

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word. I used it this morning when I wrote to the keeper for papa; yet when *he* says it, it is as though sweet music sounded across the sea, and I, alone on all the shore, stood listening. I told him that I thought I understood. I do not know if he heard me. He had a way of asking questions without seeming to care, scarcely to hear, whether one answered him or not.

And he has gone. His book is done. All the dear quaint ways and speech of the people, all the grand hills and their secrets, all the lovely land which lies around my island home, all the tender lights which linger on the seas at morning and at evening—he has caught their inspiration; they have breathed their strong fair life into his; and he will give them faithfully out again to the unseeing world, in the romance of which he has written the greater part

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here on these same rocks, with me unheeded at his side. When he had done as much as he felt inclined for, he would read the sheets out to me, and often ask me concerning names and little ways of speech.

Just over there, on that rock where the sea is quietly coming in, I learnt how sweet Mary McAlister, sweetest surely of all the heroines that was ever written down, prayed for her love that the best might crown his life, and when the best for him meant the worst for her, hesitated never a moment, but said good-bye to him, her tearless blue eyes bright with the love which is the love everlasting. The rock where he wrote that is holy ground to me. Twice a day the sun kisses it, and twice a day the cool sea comes up and covers it. Otherwise, I think, nothing touches it. On my way out here I always skip across

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it from the one on the other side. It is a good jump, but I can just manage it. To tread on it would be like treading on a heart to me. I wonder what he would say if he knew. I wish my eyes were blue, but they are grey, very, very grey, papa always says.

September 3rd.—Papa heard from him this morning. He is staying for the shooting at a great house in the north. There is a large party there. Before he went he told me who some of the people were to be. There is one called Lady Evelyn Bertram. He was glad to think she would be there, because they met last year and became, he told me, the very best of good friends after just one hour's acquaintance. At the end of his letter to papa, he sent many kind regards to my stepmother and his love to little Nell, as he

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often called me, though indeed I was nineteen last birthday, and am taller than most girls, I fancy.

It was a strange idea this, that came to me to keep a diary. It only came to me when I stood on the rocks waving him a last good-bye as his steamer sailed away. Something went from my heart to my throat, and I knew that if I stood still looking out any longer on that great sweet sea, I should choke for very agony of longing. So I went back swiftly by the rocks and up the heather hills to where my home is, and there I went upstairs to my own little study and got paper, the wonderful pen he gave me, a fairly-sized tin box, and a sheet of waterproof cloth, and brought them back out here. I had walked altogether seven miles without knowing that I had walked one. Luckily

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my stepmother was away at Brodick for the afternoon. Not that she is aught but kind to me, but she is so sharp at seeing things, and insatiable in her curiosity, and I would have no one in the world ever know of this. Each day when I have written what I want to write, I shall put the record in the tin box and tie the water-proof sheet tightly round it, and put it under the big stone at the far end of the cave. When I lie awake in my bed at home, I shall think of how the sea is creeping in and covering up my secret; of how the little waves are washing over the record of that which came to make my life so radiant and so rich; of how, should there come to me, perhaps, the sudden death from which we weekly pray to be delivered, then no one will ever know how well I loved him, no one but God and the

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sea, the two great secret-keepers of the world.

The lights are so beautiful this evening, and I have tarried so long to watch them that the tide is already on the turn. The steamer in which he went away is coming round the point. Perhaps it brings me a letter from him! Who knows? He said he would write. I must put my writing by, and run!

September 4th.—The steamer brought me no word from him. That is natural. Men, in the efforts of whose brains a whole nation shares, cannot be expected to trouble overmuch about each little individual of that nation at whom they may have smiled in passing. And yet he stayed with us for two months. For two months, he and I, we rode and walked, we fished and boated, we planned and effected, we

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laughed and talked—or sometimes we were silent—together. So I cannot think that I am nothing more to him, for instance, than the pieces of sea-weed that he would fish up from the pools on the point of his stick, admire them for a moment, then fling them far from him out upon the sea.

But I will never be exacting. Exacting women must be so odious, I should think. Should he never notice me again in all his lifetime, should he forget me utterly and wholly, I still can only say: “My dear love, since it is you who do it, it must be well done.”

September 5th.—I do not quite know why it is, yet my life would somehow seem to date from that sunny afternoon at the end of June, when papa, who went to meet him, brought him speeding back along the high path that runs between the heather

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and the yellow broom. Were anyone to tell me now that I should write an account of my life up to that date, I should feel benumbed with helplessness, and be able to set down no other words than these—

“Happy as a bird is happy in its nest.”

Until there came a day when someone whispered to the little bird that it had wings, and taught it how to use them, and then the nest was no longer all-sufficient for it, but rather the wide world itself seemed small when it fancied it must spread those tiny trembling wings and sing its ecstasy of love from pole to pole!

I remember that the week before he came, papa had given me his last book to read, and the thought of it was all fresh and beautiful in my heart as we sat await-

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ing him in the library, my stepmother looking very earnest over some accounts she was adding up, I in my white serge dress, leaning from the window to talk my impatience off to a starling grubbing about on the lawn. Finally, for lack of response, I turned to my stepmother :

“ What a pity papa has no photograph of him ! But he will be tall, and spare, and have deep curious eyes that will look best when they are smiling. Often he will seem to see us, when as a matter of fact he will be seeing the far-away things of his own creation alone. Of course his hair will be a little grey, his back a little bent, his coat, even his best one, a little out of shape. I hope he won’t be very absent-minded, don’t you, mother ? If he only goes to the mild length of taking mustard with his strawberry-cream and

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sugar with chicken, it will be supportable, and by way of a change, quite refreshing. But I read the other day of a literary man, who, in a fit of thinking, walked straight into a river in broad daylight, and was with difficulty saved at all. It will be most interesting but at the same time rather trying, if——”

“ My dear Nell, what a way you have of putting things ; I see McNeill charges a halfpenny a pound more for mutton than he did at this time last year. We really must kill our own. Yes, indeed, it would be very trying.”

Presently she called to me :

“ You will soil your dress, Nell, if you lean out with your arms on the sill like that. I should like at least his first impression of you to be a clean one ; it will probably be his last.”

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You could never put a note of exclamation after anything my stepmother says. She never means to be irresistibly funny or irresistibly pathetic, or irresistibly anything. And though at heart she is generous to the core, yet I verily think she would fight to the death a poor butcher whom she rather fancied to be cheating her out of a solitary farthing beyond his just due. Taking her altogether, the effect she has on me at times is too comical for expression.

"Mother!" I laughed, "do you remember a sentence in that last book of his, about a fine soul grasping the light of the world and calling it his own? You think the man who wrote that would notice whether my dress was soiled beyond redemption or white with a celestial whiteness?"

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She looked very serious for a moment, then said:

“ Surely we never had kidneys for three days running the week before last? Think, dear, did we? No, I do not remember that sentence. I remember it was all right and they married in the end. As far as I could see, they might have done so in the beginning. And never tell me that men don't notice what a girl has on. Before he has been here five minutes, he will have noticed that your hair is golden, your eyes grey, that your dress fastens in folds at the side, that your white silk sash is twisted twice round the waist, and that you have roses at your throat. If he is half a man, which, from your father's accounts I presume he is, he will not be long before he notices too that your shoes are both smart and neat, your stockings

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of black silk, and your ankles by no means badly turned. He will probably think you are wearing the roses for his especial joy. My dear, I have not lived for ten years in London and been married twice for nothing. I may say that I know men—profoundly."

She spoke without any heat, or defiance, or sense of fun: she might as well have been saying that she knew bakers and butchers—profoundly. And while I sat quietly in a deep soft chair, and tucked my feet well under my dress, and took the roses and held them in my hand, and pondered as to what it was to know men after the manner of my stepmother, carriage wheels came crunching along the high western drive, and almost in another moment father came into the room in his cheery way, saying :

"Here he is! Mr Alec Stanton. My

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wife and daughter. Now then, Stanton, which of the two evils is it to be—tea, or something stronger?"

Then he smiled at us, and from the moment that he took my hand in his I count that my soul's awakening began.

September 8th.—I am always thinking, as yesterday or a little while ago I wrote it down : "How beautiful to live the life he lives!" One evening, he and I, we wandered through the upper reaches of Glen Sannox, where the beauty is so wild and terrible, that I, whose life is encompassed with beauty on every side, nevertheless tremble each time afresh as I stand where Goat Fell rises to the south, with Glen Iorsa stretching in sublime loneliness to the west, and far away in front, little Corrie village, lying where the hills dip down to the sober seas. I was listening as

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he talked to me, and thinking even as I listened.

Now I, I drink in beauty, love, sweet ways and sights and sounds, with every breath I breathe. Yet no one is the better off because I do so. If my life is not particularly unkind or wrong, it is because nothing such ever comes to touch it. Then I think of him and of his life, and of the vastness of the difference between it and mine.

For instance, it may be a small thing only—it may be just that John Cromla is telling him how in places the heather grows across deep narrow chasms, so that it would seem that no chasm is there at all: and how, the other day, a little lamb fell through one such place to a depth of forty feet, yet was not killed: and of the agony of the poor mother, powerless to

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help, yet hearing the cries of the little one below. Or it may be a sense of the mystery and the passion of the sea which enchains and holds him fast so that he is dead to aught else but its wonderful strange influence. But whether it be a small thing or a great that touches him, he grasps the charm, the spirit, the secret of it all, and gives them out again in strong sweet language so that the glad ones of the world may read to their greater gladness, the blind ones to their sight perhaps, and the weary ones to their exceeding comfort and delight.

Then it was, I think, that the idea first took hold of me, that if I might but touch the fringe of such a life, my own would thereby grow calm and whole, and strong with the strength that comes for each day's need. So I bravely up and asked him—

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we were resting on a rock in the wildest, weirdest part of the glen, so near to where the foaming water dashes past, that I remember its soft spray caught my face, and he had my hand still in his, where he had been holding it during the last bit of stiff, almost perilous descent. He was always so careful of me—of me, who knew no danger of my island home, and yet was pleased sometimes to think I did, so I might feel around me the comfort of his protecting ways.

“Tell me, will you, what is wanted to write a story? Not a great story, yet one that would go straight to people’s hearts and leave them a little other than it found them perhaps?”

“My Heather-Nell, why do you ask?”

“Because—I want to know.”

“So many things. Chiefly, perhaps, a

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heart to feel, a brain to grasp, and a patience indescribable with which to set the record down. Are you going to try and manage it?"

"Since I have known you it has seemed to me that I would rather be the very least and smallest worker in the life you live than gain the greatest glory and renown in any other."

"That is the right spirit, Heather-Nell. That is as it should be. But it is a life for which a brave, brave soul is needed. Is it for fame you would wish to live it? I think not, but if so, God help you. Can you see the ladder set up on earth and reaching to that giddy height? Many are climbing it; some are slipping down even from what they once attained—the pressure is so great, the rungs are crowded with the strugglers; each time we gain a step we

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are treading on the fingers of a brother or a sister below us ; it all hurts horribly, and we dare not think too much, or we should never *do* at all. Is it for love that you would live it ? If so, God help you too, my dear. For you must go into a strange land and suffer many things ; tear-stained and pain-marked, with weary feet and aching heart, you must tread the thorny shadowy way : and, it may be, that in your darkest hour you will weep alone. Will you brave all this, all this for love and for the sweet work's sake ? "

Long and earnestly he looked at me, and I felt the hot tears rising slowly to my eyes. The air was sweet and very still : the shadows lay long and blue across the land : a silence was around us like to no other silence I have known. Where the great hills rose to the high gold sky, a wonder-

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ful tremulous light was quivering. When I see that light in the sky at evening I always think of the face of one I know in the village near our home; one whose life has been sanctified by a pain so mighty that the gentlest fingers may not touch it; and because of her, I call it the Renunciation Light.

And thinking of the sad grave words he last had spoken, looking at them, as it were, through the magic of that clear transfigured light, I saw that one must work for love, and love alone, though at God's altar one may never stand and take one's love for better or for worse.

I sometimes wonder if he knew a little what was passing in my mind just then. For he took my other hand as well, and held them both within his own big strong ones, and in his tenderest way he spoke to me:

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“Only keep you yourself unspotted from the world, my Heather-Nell, and do not be afraid to dream the old big faiths, which our hearts are growing small to hold to-day, always remembering that he who would know how to live must learn to love —must learn at all, at any cost, to love.”

Then he watched with me a little skiff that seemed to be sailing right into the heart of the sunset fire on the far western waters, while over the mountain-top where the sky was pale a small red star hung tremblingly.

“It is a night of inspiration, is it not?” he said. “A night when great thoughts come to us, and insight makes us brave, when we hear no more the discord of the earth, for that wide and faint-white sky breathes one word only, that of Peace. On such a night as this, Heather-Nell,

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when our hearts seem very near to that great Heart of the Most High, we plan in confidence and quietness the tasks and labour of our life. On such a night as this, when the moon will soon be climbing up that sweet steep sky, and the whole space of earth and sea and heaven be wrapped in a tender radiance which cannot be uttered, we look most fearlessly down the misty pathway of the future, and seem to know that what we *would* do, that we *will* do: that courageous, constant, patient as we would be, that we also will be! But to-night will pass away: its glow and glory will soon be no more seen: and, sadder thought than this, the quickening faith, the hope, the transport and the eager longing which it inspired in us—these cannot stay with us. The weary days will come, the days of darkness and

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of hardness, when work will seem so hateful and so hopeless, and death itself, perhaps, the fairest thing that life can show. Then mocking voices will ask of you: ‘What good? What good? Why care? Why strive?’ and like many another one before you, you will be tempted to lay down your arms and try no more. But, little one, it is just here that you must be so strong and never heed the storm that blinds, the cruelty that cuts, the comfortlessness that unnerves.

‘For tasks in hours of insight willed,
Must be in hours of gloom fulfilled.’

So a brave soul has sung to us. Once in a weary while, it may be on a lonely mountain-top or it may be in the crowded city-heart, something sets the Divine spark aglow within us; in a moment it dies

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away, and we have to work for whole long years by the memory of that light alone.

"Once, in an ancient legend-steeped Italian city, I knew an old musician, worn and very weary with the way of life. He was always working, always before his scores, at dawn or in the twilight seated either at the organ or at his table in the organ-loft. His cheeks were furrowed and his hands were stiff and bent, yet his dim eyes held some strange sweet secret in their quiet depths. One evening, as we sat together talking in the fragrant silence, he told it me.

"'Very many years ago,' he said, 'it must be nearly forty now, I had a dream. And in that dream I heard a music. A music tender, warm, divine; a music that was never of the earth. And ever since

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I have been trying to find it again, but I cannot—I cannot—at least, not yet.'

"The people called him mad. Everything they cannot understand they call so too. The people, for whom your heart must beat in constant sympathy, will have no sympathy for you, my Heather-Nell. But you and I, we know he was not mad. We know that he was working by the memory of the light that once was his."

So he spoke, my dearest one, to me, to me! And oh! how high my heart was lifted up! The little skiff that was sailing into the western fire had gone, I wonder where. The glory of the day declined, and we set our faces homeward across the darkening land.

But first—first—under the shadow of the hills he kissed me. "Dear!" he said, and kissed me. And the memory of that,

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the only kiss he ever gave or ever will give me, will stand between me and my pain to the end of life.

September 10th.—Two days have gone and it is evening-time, and I am in my lonely little cave once more. I have been busy all the long warm mornings since he went, writing the story which he told me I might send to him when done. It is quite a short tale, but it is not finished yet, for I am continually seeing all its faults and trying to set them right. I have called it "*The Love of Helen Cromla for John McRae*," and I hope he will not tell me I must change its name, though indeed it is not after the fashion of the story-world perhaps.

"Be always simple and try for no effects," he used to tell me. "Write from your deepest heart and never mind if it

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hurts you. But clothe your thoughts in plain and common words, and take for your theme some simple thing around you. Do not be sorry if no great tragedy or storm of action lies within it. You would not have the world always walking about on stilts, would you? A grain of humanity is worth an ounce of plot. Above all, let your work be very quietly done. Let your mountains and your sea speak to you sometimes of work that is

‘Too great for haste, too high for rivalry.’”

On the night he spoke these things to me, he gave me a little bunch of Parnassus grass and tied it himself with a pink cord which had held his manuscript together. When, in my work, the actual seems so far from the ideal, I sometimes take it from its hiding-place, and the tiny crushed

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white stars bid me be of good cheer once more.

September 12th.—Quite early this morning I got up and flung my window open to the sweet, strong mountain air which seemed to be filled with a voiceless benediction. This has been a day for me, such as no other day on earth will be again, and on looking back across it, now that its dear twilight is sinking down, I am glad to remember that one of my waking thoughts was that the love of God is always going round and round the world He made. I cannot say what made me think just that, in the silence and the sweetness of that radiant dawn. The larches glistened with a thousand drops of dew, the cows were nibbling at the hawthorn trees, the linnets rose up out of the heather with rushing ecstasy of song, the distant mountains and

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the sea were veiled in a luminous silver mist. It came to me how, on that evening whose glory he and I lived through together, he had said that the sight of all fair things should leave on us some little stamp of their own fairness. Then I prayed that some touch of the calmness and the confidence of that blessed morning might be mine, the morning that did not fear to smile and love, although the long sad winter lies ahead.

Later on, as I sat in the library, amongst the books and flowers and pleasant things and steadfastly set my face from looking out towards that great sweet sea that throbs between us, I had aching need of the things which the morning's fairness bade me ask for. I heard the post-boy's horn echoing up the brae and the pigeons fluttering from the dove-cot at the sound of

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it as they always do. I did not run out to meet the post-boy, because I knew that my face was all aglow. So I waited till Andrew found me out, saying with a queer smile on his dear old face :

“One for you, Miss Heather!”

There I sat, in the depths of my great chair, and held the little white thing to my heart, and talked to it, and kissed it, and dreamt about it, and asked it, in tears of joy, why it had tarried so long in coming! I could not open it for very delight’s sake. It was his, and I always must hold what is his in a reverence which I cannot explain at all. But at last I turned my chair round to the window and the rose-garden and the brave blue sky, and the sea so far below, and presently, whilst these things were blotted from my sight, I read. I think if I write the words

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down here, in my little record of the bitter-sweetness of the days, all that is gentle in them will stay with me, while that in them which sets my heart so sorely aching may somewhat pass away.

"How is it with you, my Heather-Nell? Forgive me, won't you? Your eyes were made to forgive and love with, so I stand a chance, I think. But I should have written long before this to you. I have no excuse to offer. Are you working, dreaming, hoping, remembering? You have not forgotten, have you, how fearless we were, you and I, in our talks with one another? How we talked of love, marriage, and the future, as serenely and as closely as of the stars, the clouds, the sea? In the world there are not many souls who can look into each other's

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eyes and talk as you and I did on those evenings by the sea. Do you remember when we set our ideals each before the other, and wondered how far towards them our lives would let us climb? My Heather-Nell, very, very soon: I am to be married. I should like to hold your hand in mine again and hear you say, as I know that you are doing, in that dear lingering voice of yours: 'Be—very—happy.' And yet I should not. Will you hold out hands to me across the waters, invisible hands of a friendship, a comprehension that nothing can destroy? It is to her of whom I spoke once to you. I danced with her one night, just a week ago. I danced—I danced my head away. Send the story to me when done. And work on, sweet eyes, for life, for love, for the sake of that high

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estate to which many, it may be, are called, but for which only those who keep their ideals untarnished are chosen."

That is all, and it is signed simply, shortly—*Alec.*

At lunch, my stepmother, to whom he sent a society paper with the news of his engagement to the Lady Evelyn Bertram in it, remarked across the table to my father:

"He has played his cards very fairly well. She has birth and money. He has brains and common sense. Put the four together and you get a by no means despicable whole. Also, he has or will have fame. Love, did you say, my dear? If love cannot thrive in such a ground as that, it is a commodity altogether beneath the consideration of

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either a lady or a gentleman. Which reminds me that our potatoes are doing extremely well this year — that new sort."

Then father looked at me in his comical way, and we both laughed, oh! how heartily and gaily! until mother caught fire herself at last and joined in with us in a bewildered wondering kind of way which excited father and me to greater merriment even than before, she looking all the time so prettily proud of being the cause of so much mirth. Surely if a list of all the good things God has given us were to be drawn up in order of merit, so to speak, the delight of laughter would come very near the top. I know it saved my heart this day from breaking visibly before the eyes of those two dear and kind ones.

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And now the golden day is nearly over. Very gently and fairly it rose for me. That early glory on the mountains, the morning star that hung in the wide pink eastern sky, the dew that lingered on the larches, the gold that trembled on the sea, the little letter that came at noon, the hour, the dark and tearless hour that followed: the laughter and the lunch, the long ride with papa across the sweet wild moorland, the quiet hour here by the sea when all God's tender world is ringing to evensong.—O my dear one, the beauty of this day's dawn, of this day's close, shall not be in vain for me, since no small thought concerning you shall ever stain my heart. But the tears are blinding my eyes at last, the tears you may not kiss away—and I can only say, good-night, good-bye, beloved.

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God grant that she may love you very,
very well.

September 19th.—A little week has gone. We call it summer still — the days are so fair and sweet and warm; just as sometimes we call it youth when the heart is very tired but the eyes remember still to smile.

I have been taking hold of my life and looking it well and fairly in the face. At first I could not. When the common tasks claimed me no more, I could only turn my blinded eyes from the sky so blue and hide them where I lay, face downwards in the heather, while the prayerless pain-swept hour went by. Until one calm bright morning I got up out of my stupor, and by a heaven-sent flash of insight saw what one's life should strive to be, when one

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has memory to bless and work to strengthen it. How beautiful if one had hope as well—if down the long vista of the future that golden lamp were held aloft! How lightly then would one's weary feet tread the ways of earth, how little would one feel the loneliness, the coldness, the dismay! For in that great Beyond of Love one would find again what the life below for a little while had lost. But he, my dearest one, he is more dead to me than had he only died.

So I turned to my life and saw that of all things good and lovable it held these two for me—memory and work. The memory is mine whether I will or not. Surely also, the work shall be mine none the less. Since I need not work to keep body and soul together, all the

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more should I work that my soul may some day go back bright and steadfastly to Him who gave it.

I think of the great apostles and martyrs of work ; and of the vast unwritten army of the world who follow in their train. Have memory and hope been with them too, these who call work their fortifier and their faith : or has the work itself, whether of head or hand, sweet or bitter, crowned or uncrowned, been their constant all in all ? I think too, of him, the large-hearted calm philosopher who, as he lay dying, reverently thanked the Author of all goodness for the little excursion he had been allowed to make from nothingness into reality ; who saw such beauty in all human joy and woe, seeing how they touched with the glory of reality this little conscious space called life which stands be-

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tween the darkness of what has been, and the darkness of what shall be? Sternly, yet beautifully and bravely according to his light, he put hope away from him, not daring to say "I believe" where he could not say "I see," in spite of those heavenly words so dear. Yet to him his work was very real, his heart strong with love, his life fearless and without reproach. I wonder what was the motive that inspired him. I wonder, did a face sometimes shine between him and his labour? A face, as tender and as grave, as comforting and as comprehending, as the one that still sometimes smiles on me, where I lie dreaming softly of the love that never will be, listening mutely to words that never were. I would that all the world had memories as sweet as mine.

September 22nd.—The story is done.

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It is of course only a short one. It must lie here in the corner of the cave, along with these pages of my diary. I was to have sent it to him and he was to have told me where its errors lay, and where, if he could discover any, its merit. But in these latter evenings, as I wrote, I seemed to be dipping my pen in my own heart's blood, and I know that now I cannot send the little red-stained sheets to him.

September 25th.—The bay was very bright and calm last night. The sun had gone down below Goat Fell and all the western sky was palest gold and pink ; only the evening star was out ; the herring boats lay at anchor beyond the lighthouse rocks ; a mavis was singing from the fields above the cliffs. I stopped from my writing to think how fair it was, and I turned to him to say so. I thought he

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answered me : " Dear, it is," and I turned once more to see his smile, and remembered then that the great sea lay between us and that his smiles were for another.

September 26th.—It is Sunday to-day. My father and stepmother are lunching and spending the afternoon at the Castle, and they will not be home again until the evening. I was invited too, but my white serge dress is a little soiled and my linen ones are not smart enough, and our high light dog-cart is best when they are just the two in front, so that altogether we thought I had better stay at home. Father kissed me on both cheeks before they drove off, and looked at me rather sadly for a moment, I thought, and said that I must get some of the pink of my namesake into my face before he kissed it again ! I made them each a button-

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hole—papa, one of heather, and my step-mother, one of sweet late roses.

“ And now, run and make yourself one, dear,” she called to me as I stood watching them out of sight ; “ at one time you were never without a flower in your frock ! ”

She does not know of the little bunch of Parnassus grass that is inside my dress bodice, lying against my heart.

In the glory of the afternoon I came down through the shadows of the glen, and by the heather hills, through the forest where the red deer roam, and across the cool soft sands to where my cave is. And now, as I sit at its little gate which opens on to the wide blue pastures of the sea, a great peace is in me, and God has lifted all my weariness away.

The sea-song is sighing softly all around

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—the sea-song whose magic and whose mystery no man may altogether know. It is singing me strangely, gently, to a garden very fair and far away. Sometimes before I have caught dream-glimpses of that garden, seen it in some imperfect troubled light, through the mists of childhood's fancy, peopled with the angel-heroes of childhood's day. Only then, when I longed to enter and call a little corner of it mine, my hands were not strong enough to turn the handle of the great door built in the high wall that goes all round, while now the door is open wide, and no faintness dims the vision, for the sun is shining down the long gravelled walks, and the glow of colour and the wealth of scent are surely as they never were before. I am sitting on a little wooden seat near the door whose handle

Off Arran's Isle

once seemed so high to reach, and the great white lilies with their hearts of gold are keeping sentinel watch behind. Down the fragrant silence I see the roses shining, like little globes of crimson and of amber light. The sunbeams are striking on the close-set lines of the laurels till each tiny burnished leaf is a quivering point of fire. On either side of the central walk, tall hedges of the scarlet phlox send a glow down the radiant way ; at their feet the allium lies like a snowdrift, and the hearts-ease with their tiny velvet lips are clustering ; while by the old moss-grown wall are great banks of lavender and purple thyme and the musk whose yellow cups are so full of scent and sweetness. A thousand little bees are flying for their treasure to that garden ; their songs are smiting the odorous air ; they take, in

Off Arran's Isle

time, each one his little load of wealth back to the world beyond the old grey wall, yet the garden-world within is still the richer for their coming.

Though everything there is so homely, so human, so simply named, yet each flower is a suggestion, each shadowy or sun-smitten way an inspiration—a continual comfort breathes from that garden face. Over the great door near me a glorious passion-flower is climbing; the scarlet wound-marks at its heart seem to say that those who enter into the peace of that dear garden must enter by the royal road of pain. At the farther end from where I sit, a screen of tall cypresses lends an enchanting air of mystery to the gentle ways. Through the door, which stands ajar, come glimpses of green woods where the ground is starred with blue hepaticas

Off Arran's Isle

and the little periwinkle poor Jean Jacques Rousseau loved so well. Beyond the woods are upland slopes where the corn-lands are whitening to a harvest which seems as no earthly harvest I have known, and, here and there amongst that harvest-gold are fields all pink with the saint-foin which the monks of old used to call the Holy Hay of the Bethlehem Manger, while down on the sweet faint wind come snatches of the songs of those who work just underneath God's brave blue sky. As I sit, the shadows lengthen, the birds and bees have stayed their music, the evening star is trembling beyond the highest cedar, the flowers are waiting for the evening dews to fall and kiss them, the trees show black against the paling azure of the west.

Ah! what is that wondrous glow lighting up the cypress gloom at the far end of

Off Arran's Isle

the garden? See, how the little leaves take on a swift and sudden glory they surely never knew before! See, how like some shining peace that wondrous radiance bears down the tender solemn ways! See, how in the triumph and the silence, each tiny flower-face is turned to catch some gleam of the marvellous light: some of the little heads are drooping: it is as though their joy was stronger than their strength.

And then, and then, up from the cypress shadows, making all the light grow faint and pale around, there comes a Face, a Presence—oh! is it, is it indeed—His—Face? Not the dear eager face of my earthly love—but that other Face, the Face which sometimes shines so dimly down our way when the world is bright about us——

Off Arran's Isle

Ah! those outstretched arms, that slow
and stately tread, those wound-marked feet
that do not seem to touch the earth, that
face so gentle and so beauteous which
holds in it the comprehension of the pain
and the perplexity of all the world, those
eyes so welcoming—it is for me, for me,
that those arms are opened wide, for me
that those eyes are kind, for me that those
lips say: “Come! Little dear one, come
away!”

• • • • •

I have been sleeping. The strong tide
is sweeping up. No help, no human soul
is near. I cannot swim. Death, death
that will not wait or tarry, cold strange
death—its icy fingers are touching me.

Oh, my love, my love, I have so little
time, I cannot say what I would say to
you. But if, some day, should life go

Off Arran's Isle

hardly with you and you come back to this very spot in memory of the pleasantness it once was to you to be here, and just for the old sake's sake you turn to the little secret of the cave which is known alone to you and me, and find these pages there where I will put them, then, Oh, my dear love, let it be no sorrow to you to know how well I loved you. If in the blackness and the hardness of the day God lets my spirit come to you with some sense of nearness and of comfort—ah ! then, what sweetness to have died. To be nearer to you in death perhaps, than in life I ever might have been. God, who sent that long sweet sleep to me just now, the sleep that means my death, God comfort those two kind hearts at home and presently take their pain away.

The water is rising fast. Life with its

Off Arran's Isle

dreams, its faith, its anguish was strangely glorious, since you were living too. Good-bye, my well-beloved, good-bye, for I am very tired and He says: "Come."

The last words were evidently written in greatest haste: it was with considerable difficulty that the man who was reading could make them out at all. He had stood rooted to the wave-washed spot so long that the strong breath of the swift in-rolling sea was already on his face, just as it had been on hers perhaps, on that long-gone evening when she waited for her death. Like her, he too was very tired. But, unlike her, he was not brave to die—perhaps because no sweet face smiled to him across the waters, saying:

"Come."

"World-sick, world-tainted, but ever

Off Arran's Isle

clinging to that world, while yet there was time he sped across the darkening sands and up the hills to where a lonely little burying-ground stands high to the mountains and the western sea, and a small granite cross rising out of a glowing mass of the flower which once had given its name to her tells how, one September Sunday evening,

HEATHER HELEN BUTE,

the well-beloved and only child of Archibald and Mary Helen Bute, was drowned off the Arran shores.

v

In
Exile

**“ Banished ?
O friar, the damned use that word in hell.”**

THE sun was low, and there was evening glory in the sky, as we set to steam away from the harbour by whose pleasant shores our home had been. I held Love high in my arms, and her tiny feet were dancing on the deck-rail as we waved our last good-byes to "Faver" on the pier below. Long we held fast to each other there, untouched by all the bustle of departure, until we could no longer see across the shining waves that white-clad figure any more, and then we turned to soothe the deep distress in one another's eyes.

"Me see Faver to-morrow?" she asked doubtfully.

"No, dear."

In Exile

“The next to-morrow?”

“No, dear.”

“Well, the next to-morrow after that,
me see Faver?” this with absolute certainty.

“O no, dear,” I told her, because I could
not help myself; “not at all. I mean not
for ever and ever so many to-morrows and
to-morrows and to-morrows.”

Then her pretty bravery gave way, and
I envied my baby daughter as she clung to
me, her little body shaking with a storm of
sobs.

Darkness came down violently as we left
the entrance to the Sound, and struck out
on our way across the world; and it was—
O, how swift our ship sailed on, how slow
our souls. One by one the outlines of the
great hills melted into gloom, the forest-
hills that held within their shadows the
lodestar of our life. When, for all our

In Exile

love, we could no longer make out a vestige of the home-land more, we went below, and I got my little daughter ready for the night. At the moment that she was kneeling in her long white bed-gown, with folded hands, to say her tiny prayer, the ship's band broke out into a merry tune on deck, and she quickly unclasped her hands and beat them together for joy, for of all things she loved a band, especially a band where drums were. She was much concerned to know if "Dod" would hear her prayer at all, if He would not much sooner listen to the beautiful band; and as there was a clause that evening for which we wished a special hearing—so that there should be no mistake—we waited till the tune was over, and then went on as usual, nothing doubting. Soon after that she fell asleep, a sweet smile on

In Exile

the pearl-rose cheeks that had been so lately washed with tears, and it was twice I envied her that day.

“Little Love,” I whispered to her where she lay so quietly breathing; “you and I, we are going far away to find something we perhaps never had; or, if we had it, our eyes were blinded that we did not know. But we shall not find it till we come back again, not though we wander far and wide, and seek it longingly all our days. But what we mean is our own little secret, and very soberly let us guard it, till in God’s good time, with a dauntless hope, we come again.”

I was never sure of Arthur’s love. That explains perhaps the depth of mine for him. I am not wise to know how these things are ruled, but that there are laws here as well

In Exile

as elsewhere I make no doubt. It may be that it is not good for any man to know that with a look, a gesture, or a tone he can hurt or comfort unutterably the woman whose life is in his keeping; that in his hands she is as a highly-wrought, finely strung instrument which he may touch to issues most sweet or sorrowful as he will. Or, if he must know these things, his knowledge should be tempered with an infinite mercy, or disaster may come to spell the way. Arthur knew them well of me, but then he was—Arthur, my husband, and little Love's father dear.

I remember how at his first coming the days of my life seemed suddenly to turn to gold, and now no poverty of the present can take away that richness which once was mine. But although the quiet years in that far-off tropic home where Arthur worked

In Exile

and I was near him always and my little Love came to me, hold memories to make any woman's life glad with continual rejoicing, I was learning a lesson in them, learning it bit by bit and day by day to the murmur of the humming-birds, the scent of the almond and the santal groves, and the prattle of my tiny maid, a lesson which even now my heart fails me to say properly for all the tears and pains I put to know it.

I cannot praise my husband. I cannot here sit down and in cheap words write of his high honour, his gentleness, his skill, the matchless grace and care with which he hid what now I think must have been his utter weariness of life and left no duty of a man undone—there are easier things to write than these, and it is of them that I would speak.

In Exile

One evening in latter times as we sat together in the dusk, he asked me :

“How long have we been married?”

“Five years last April the ninth.”

“And Love is——?”

“Just three and a half. Arthur, she grows dearer every day, don’t you think so? Can you at all imagine our life without her? She seems to fill up every——”

“I know; yes. But for a few minutes let us confine ourselves to the point. At least, excuse me, I don’t suppose you were aware there was a point. But, as a matter of fact, I want to talk things over with you. I want you to listen quietly, and not make trouble either for yourself or me, dear, out of what I have to say. I have been thinking that you and Love should go home for a time. How does it strike you —this?”

In Exile

“—— Home?”

“Well, you know, England is always understood to be home. The heat has been so trying lately, and I think the change would be a tonic for you both.”

“Oh, Arthur! We are both so well.”

He smiled at me a slow, long, lasting smile. If I had fallen then and there at his feet and not gainsaid my drowning tears, we might not now be journeying into exile, Love and I.

“I’m not sure,” he went on presently, with a gentle reluctance which made my grief burn deeper, “that in marriage an occasional absence or parting does any harm whatever, rather the contrary. I don’t mean in any vulgar sense. You mustn’t misunderstand me. But it seems to me that it would enlarge and freshen up our interests vastly to have each what one prizes most at the other end of the world for a time. It

In Exile

doesn't sound extraordinary or unkind what I'm saying, does it, dear? Think it over quietly, and think of it as something quite natural and not at all out of the due order of things. Don't let me feel that I am talking hardly to you. Don't, whatever you do, indulge in that weak luxury of fancying yourself martyred in any way. Think rather what delicate possibilities of happiness are still in store for both of us. Always together, we take everything each for granted of the other. Separated for a while, what looking forward, what hope, delight of meeting which could not be unless came first the parting."

Then I did a thing for which I hate myself even now, though indeed Arthur forgave me it a minute later.

"And Love and I," I said, "must go far away to provide these new emotions."

In Exile

So easy it is to say this kind of thing,
so awful to remember afterwards that the
mark it left may be aching still to-day.

"O, Eleanor!" was all his answer. I
wish it had been all my punishment.

"Dearest," I hurried on in bitter shame,
"I didn't mean that at all. I meant how
will you get on; who will look after you?
Supposing you are lonely, supposing you
are ill, supposing you miss us too badly,
supposing the people worry you or things
go very wrong. . . ."

"Supposing nothing of the sort, except
that I shall miss you more than there are
words to tell," he answered in his kindly,
careless way.

There was nothing more to say. It
seemed to me that a crisis in my life was
reached, that my sun was setting ere ever
it had climbed the zenith, and I could have

In Exile

cried out to have stopped it in its course. Only, as Arthur spoke, I dimly felt that I had been waiting for his words through all the summer days gone by. Often, when I would look up quickly from my book or sewing, and find that long, quiet look of his fixed on me, I would know that he was judging me ; and I would eagerly talk all the nonsense I could think of, lest he should pronounce the verdict then and there.

“Besides,” he added, on the evening when his decree, so kindly meant, went forth : “I rather fancy there is going to be some trouble with the natives, in which case it will be unquestionably better for you and Love to be away.”

Then once more I fell that day, and fell so low that, in my own eyes, I can hardly rise again.

“O, please,” I said, drawing myself up

In Exile

very tall for less than a moment's space,
“let us leave the poor natives out of the
question”; and, saying it, fled quickly to
hide my burning face by the cradle-side of
little Love.

• • • •

Now that wide seas are between us, it
is my solace to remember how, later on, he
came to me and said—

“I know you didn't mean that either,
dear.”

Many months ago we arrived, Love and I, at the home of our forefathers, a great grim place set by the desolate north-west shores. And our talk together is of how we shall go again some day and find father dear, and the parrots, and the ponies, and our own pet monkey, Seth. Will the flamingoes be quarrelling in the bread-

In Exile

fruit groves, and the date-palms ripe with fruit? We wonder! Will the waves be foaming over the reef in a shining liquid arch, and Ruru, our native-boy, his clothes all scented with fragrant oil and positively trimmed with flowers for the occasion, be grinning at the door? We wonder, O we wonder!

Will there be at last that light on Arthur's face? . . . Then shall I know indeed what the sweet years of waiting at his side never of a surety told my heart?

As we sit together on the steep deserted beach, I fashion little paper boats for Love, and she trots down with them to the water's edge, and starts them gaily to go across the world, and all their cargo is a message or a kiss. How we hope that kind winds will drive those little ships into port at last! On stormy nights,

In Exile

when winds are high, we pray for them,
so frail and small, in peril on the sea.

Once a week we get a letter. We read it till we know it quite by heart. When there is a message meant very much for me it may happen that it is addressed to Love. As thus: "Tell your mother, whisper it softly, my little Love, that I miss her each day more and more."

And the place of exile seems at times a House Beautiful, for the sweetness of the tidings that it hears.

The old housekeeper has many tales for Love, who stores them in her tiny mind to tell again when father will be listening with wide admiring eyes. I have a story which I will tell him too. I heard it a little while ago, heard it in a church.

"A star was in the sky and men on earth looked up at it untiringly—its beauty

In Exile

was so deep and rare. Now it would flash an emerald and now a dusky orange glow : now it would scintillate with a lilac and now with a crimson fire blood-red as the star of war : now it burnt silvery blue then quivered white and clear, leaving no shade of colour in the solar spectrum, out. Decomposed through the telescope, that wondrous radiance was shown to be the emanation not of one but of twin stars, revolving round and round each other, with colours complementary the one unto the other, distinct, yet perfect in their unity. And there, the story ran, the picture of the true marriage is there, where they being two are yet one, one and indissoluble, diffusing a chromatic radiance of all things fair, shining ever, in a single circle, more and more unto the perfect day.

In Exile

It now seems long ago. We were wandering by the shore and a telegram was brought to us.

Mr Arthur Fitzpatrick shot dead on the terrace of Government House whilst parleying with the natives, it said. It seems so long ago.

We are weary, Love and I. There are no little paper boats to send across the sea: the new games we try to think of hang fire: it is cold and the nights are long.

We will go again where they have laid our dear one low: we will walk by the ways he loved so well: with our own hands we will dress his lonely grave: we may whisper, did those little boats come home, and think we hear him answer yes. And, as we dream and plan, the sweet lost fire comes to my little daughter's eyes once more.

In Exile

It is two years within a little of the day he fell. Love and I are back again. In the square all shadowed by palm and man-grove trees is a statue of him, calm and fair and brave, put there by loyal hands to tell all men how a man should die.

It is native work instinct with life and grace. He is seated in the attitude which in repose was so peculiarly his own, and the eyes look straight towards the sea.

The other day a strangely dear thing happened. And when I have written it I will write no more.

It was at dusk, and Love was playing by the statue in the square. I with my work was near and I noticed how she suddenly grew very grave and asked me for a pencil and a piece of paper. She said she would write a letter and post it by herself.

In Exile

When she had finished she showed it me, and the curious little crowd of hieroglyphics, being interpreted, ran:

MY FATHER DEAR,—We miss you more and more every day. We hope you like your grave. We put roses on all the time. Now I am big. Your Love.

She folded it tightly and left me without a word. She climbed up on the marble knees and pushed the little letter between the stiff-clenched fingers. Then she threw her arm round the marble neck and leant back contentedly against the marble breast. In a few minutes she was fast asleep. She had sent her news to the far country, the far country where I yet may some day hear the words which will set my heart in joy for evermore.

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